

Learning Under the Anointing

by T. Austin-Sparks

The anointing is the Holy Spirit taking His place as absolute Lord, carrying with it the absolute lordship of the Spirit, which means that we can do nothing but what the anointing teaches and leads to do.

Scripture: Matthew 3:16, Matthew 11:29, John 1:4-8, Romans 8:2, 2 Corinthians 3:16-18

Topics: "Anointing Of The Holy Spirit", "Learning in Christ"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of learning under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which signifies His absolute lordship over our lives. He explains that true learning in the School of Christ involves an inward transformation where Christ becomes part of us through experience, requiring us to submit our will and desires to the Holy Spirit. The anointing is not merely for power or influence but for complete dependence on the Spirit's guidance, leading to a deeper understanding of Christ's 'other-ness' compared to our own nature. Sparks highlights that this journey requires prayer and a willingness to let go of our own ideas, aligning ourselves with God's will. Ultimately, the first lesson in this spiritual school is recognizing the difference between our ways and God's ways, and the necessity of living in the Spirit to discern His guidance.

Transcript

Reading: Matt 11:29; John 1:51; Matt 3:16; John 1:4; Rom 8:2; 2 Cor 3:16-18.

The School of Christ; that is, the School where Christ is the great Lesson and the Spirit the great Teacher; in the School where the teaching is not objective but subjective, where the teaching is not of things but an inward making of Christ a part of us by experience--that is the nature of this School.

THE MEANING OF THE ANOINTING

"Ye shall see the heaven opened." "He saw the heavens opened and the Spirit of God descending upon him." What is the meaning of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is nothing less and nothing other than the Holy Spirit taking His place as absolute Lord. The anointing carries with it the absolute lordship of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit as Lord. That means that all other lordships have been deposed and set aside; the lordship of our own lives; the lordship of our own minds, our own wills, our own desires; the lordship of others.

The lordship of every interest and every influence is regarded as having given place to the undivided and unreserved lordship of the Holy Spirit, and the anointing can never be known, enjoyed, unless that has taken place. That is why the Lord Jesus went down into Jordan's waters, into death and burial, in type, taking the place of man in representation, from that moment not to be under the government of His own life in any respect as He worked out the will of God, but to be wholly and utterly subject to the Spirit of God in every detail.

Jordan's grave set forth the setting aside of every independent lordship, every other lordship, every other influence, and if you will read the spiritual life of Christ in the Gospels you will see that it was to that position that He was every moment adhering. Many and powerful were the influences which were brought to bear upon Him to affect Him and govern His movements. Sometimes it was the full force of Satan's open assault, to the effect that it was necessary that He should do certain things for His cause, or for His very continuance in life physically.

Sometimes it was Satan clothing himself with the arguments and suasions of beloved associates, in their seeking to hold Him back from certain courses, or to influence Him to prolong His life by sparing Himself certain sufferings. In various ways influences were brought to bear upon Him from all directions, and many of the counsels were seemingly so wise and good. For example, with regard to His going up to the feast, it was urged, in effect: It is the thing that everybody is doing: if you do not go up you will prejudice your cause.

If you really want to further this cause, you must fall into line with the accepted thing religiously, and you only stand to lose if you do not do that; you will curtail your influence, you will narrow your sphere of usefulness! And what an appeal that is if you have something very much at heart, some cause for God at heart, the success of which is of the greatest importance. Such then were the influences that were beating upon Him. But whether it be Satan coming in all the directness of his cunning, his wit, his insinuation, or whether it be through beloved and most intimate disciples and associates, whatever the kind of argument, that Man cannot be caused to deflect a hairsbreadth from His principle.

'I am under the anointing; I am committed to the absolute sovereignty of the Holy Spirit, and I cannot move, whatever it costs. Cost it my life, cost it my influence, cost it my reputation, cost it everything that I hold dear, I cannot move unless I know from the Holy Spirit that that is the Father's mind and not another mind, the Father's will and not another will, that this thing comes from the Father.' Thus He put back everything until He knew in His spirit what the Spirit of God witnessed. He lived up to this law, this principle, of the absolute authority, government, lordship of the anointing, and it was for that that the anointing had come.

That is the meaning of the anointing. Do you ask for the anointing of the Holy Spirit? Why do you ask for the anointing of the Holy Spirit? Is the anointing something that you crave? To what end? That you may be used, may have power, may have influence, may be able to do a lot of wonderful things? The first and pre-eminent thing the anointing means is that we can do nothing but what the anointing teaches and leads to do. The anointing takes everything out of our hands. The anointing takes charge of the reputation. The anointing takes charge of the very purpose of God. The anointing takes complete control of everything and all is from that moment in the hands of the Holy Spirit, and we must remember that if we are going to learn Christ, that learning Christ is by the Holy Spirit's dealing with us, and that means that we have to go exactly the same way as Christ went in principle and in law.

So we find we are not far into the Gospel of John, which is particularly the Gospel of the spiritual School of Christ, before we hear even such as He saying, "The Son can do nothing of himself". "The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself." The works that I do are not Mine; "the Father abiding in me doeth his works".

"The Son can do nothing out from himself." You see, there is the negative side of the anointing; while the positive side can be summed up in one word--the Father only. Perhaps that is a little different idea of the anointing from what we have had. Oh, to be anointed of the Holy Spirit! What wonders will follow; how wonderful that life will be! The first and the abiding thing about the anointing is that we are imprisoned into the lordship of the Spirit of God, so that there can be nothing if He does not do it. Nothing! That is not a pleasant experience, if the natural life is strong and in any way in the ascendant. Therefore Jordan must be there before there can be an anointing. The putting aside of that natural strength and self-life is a necessity, for the anointing does carry with it essentially the absolute lordship of the Spirit.

You notice the issue of that in 2 Cor 3:16. "When it shall turn to the Lord", when the Lord is the object in view, "the veil is taken away, and we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are transformed into the same image . . . even as from the Lord the Spirit", or "the Spirit which is the Lord". You are in the School and you can see Christ and learn Christ; which is being transformed into the image of Christ under the lordship of the Spirit. "When it shall turn to the Lord", when the Lord is our object in view! But with us, with us Christians, with us very devoted, very earnest Christians, what a long time it takes to get the Lord as the sole object. Is that saying a terrible thing? We say we love the Lord; yes, but we do love to have our own way as well, and we do not love to have our way thwarted. Have any of us yet reached that point of spiritual attainment where we never have a bad time at all with the Lord? Oh no, we are still found at the place where we so often think it is in the interests of the Lord that our hearts go out in a certain direction, and the Lord does not let us do it, and we have a bad time; and that has betrayed us absolutely. Our hearts were in it. It was not easy, absolutely easy and simple for us to say, Very well, Lord, I am just as pleased as though you let me do it, I delight always to do Thy will! We are disappointed the Lord does not let us do it; or if the Lord delays it, what a time we go through. Oh, if we could only get at it and do it! The time is finding us out. Is that not true of most of us? Yes, it is true. We do come into this picture, and that just does mean that, after all, the Lord is not as verily our object as we thought He was. We have another object alongside and associated with the Lord; that is, something that we want to be or to do, somewhere we want to go, something we want to have. It is all there, and the Holy Spirit knows all about it. In this School of Christ, where God's objective is Christ, only Christ, utterly Christ, the very anointing means that it has to be Christ as Lord by the Spirit. The anointing takes that position. Well, so much for the moment for the meaning of the anointing. It was true in Him, and it has to be true in us.

"LORDSHIP" AND "SUBJECTION"

If we are going to graduate in this School, graduate to the glory, the ultimate full glory of Christ, to be the competent instrument in His Kingdom for government, the one way of learning that spiritual, Divine, heavenly government which is His destiny for the saints, is subjection to the Holy Spirit. That is a very interesting word, that word 'subjection', in the New Testament. I think it has been rather mishandled and given a wrong and unpleasant meaning. The idea of subjection is usually that of being crushed down underneath, being put under all the time, suppression. "Wives, be in subjection to your own husbands." That is now interpreted as, You have to get down underneath; and the word does not mean that at all. How shall we seek to convey what the Greek word for subjection or submission really implies? Well, write down the number 1; and then you are going to write subjection or submission. How are you going to write

it? Not by putting another 1 underneath. The word means 'putting alongside it or after it'. No. 1 is the primary number, it stands in front of all that comes after, and governs and gives value to all the rest. Subjection means that He in all things has the pre-eminence. We come after and take our value from Him. It is not being crushed down, but deriving everything from Him as the first one: and you never derive the benefits until you know subjection to Christ. That is to say, you come after, you take second place, take that place by which you derive all the benefit; you get the value by taking a certain place. The Church is not subject to Christ in that repressive sense, not down under His heel or His thumb, but just coming after, alongside, He having the pre-eminence, and the Church, His Bride, deriving all the good from His pre-eminence, from His having the first place. The Church second, yes; but who minds a second place if you are going to get all the values of the first by having second place? That is subjection. The Lord's idea for the Church is that she should have everything. But how will she get it? Not by taking the first place, but by coming alongside the Lord and in all things letting Him have the pre-eminence. That is submission, subjection. The lordship of the Spirit is not something hard that strips us, takes everything from us, and keeps us down there all the time so that we dare not move. The lordship of the Spirit is to bring us into all the fullness of that headship. But we do have to learn what that lordship is before we can come into that fullness. It is of His fullness we receive.

The trouble ever was, from Adam's day till ours, that it is not someone else's fullness that man wants, it is his own; to have it in himself and not in another. The Holy Spirit cuts that ground from under our feet and says, It is His fullness, it is in Him. He must have His place of absolute lordship before we can know of His fullness. That is enough I think, for the moment, on the meaning of the anointing. Do you grasp it? The Lord give us grace to accept the meaning of Jordan in order that we may have the open heaven and, by the open heaven, the anointing which brings in all heaven's fullness for us. But it does mean the absolute lordship of the Spirit. Lesson No. 1 in the School--oh, that is not Lesson No. 1, that is the very ground of coming into the School, that is a preliminary examination. We never get into the School until we accept the lordship of the Holy Spirit. That is why so many do not get on very far in the knowledge of the Lord. They have never accepted the implications of the anointing, never really come down into Jordan. Their progress, their learning, is very slow, very poor. Find a person who really knows the meaning of the Cross, of Jordan, in the clearing of the way for the lordship of the Spirit, and you will find quick growth, you will find spiritual development far ahead of all others. It is very true. That is the preliminary, the entrance examination.

THE FIRST LESSON IN THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST

But when you are in, Lesson No. 1 begins here. It is but a reiteration of what has been strongly said in earlier meditations. The first lesson in the School of Christ which the Holy Spirit takes up to teach us is what we have called the altogether 'other-ness' of Christ from ourselves. This may be not only the first lesson but a continuous lesson throughout life. But this is the one thing with which the Holy Spirit begins, the altogether 'other-ness' of Christ from what we are. Will you take up the Gospel of John with that one thought in mind and read it again, quietly and steadily. How different Christ is from other people, even from His disciples. You can expand from John's Gospel to all the Gospels with that one thought. It will be an education to you if the Holy Spirit is with you as you read. How utterly different He is! That difference is again and again affirmed. "Ye are from beneath; I am from above" (John 8:23). That is a difference, and that difference becomes a clash all the way along; a clash of judgments, a clash of mentalities, a clash of minds, a clash of ideas, a clash of values; a clash in everything between Him and others, even with His disciples who are with Him in the School. His nature is different. He has a heavenly nature, a Divine

nature. No one else has that. He has a heavenly mind, a heavenly mentality. They have an earthly mentality, and the two cannot meet, at any point. When the last word has been said, there is a big, big gap between the two. He is so utterly other.

Now, you say, that being so, we are at a very great disadvantage. He is one thing and we are another. But that is just the nature and meaning of this School. How is that problem going to be resolved? Well, it is just resolved like this, that He is all the time speaking about a time when He will be in them and they will be in Him, and when that time comes, in the innermost and deepest reality of their being, they will be altogether other than what they are in every other part of their being. That is to say, there will be in them that which is Christ, that which is Christ in all that He is as the absolutely Other. Sometimes they will think that the best thing to do is this, but that altogether Other inside will not let them do it. Sometimes they will think that the wise thing is not to do this, and that altogether Other inside keeps saying, in effect, Get on with it! The outer man says, It is madness! I am only courting disaster! The inner Man says, You are to do it! These two cannot be reconciled. He is within and He is altogether other, and our education is to learn to follow Him, to go His way. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself . . . and follow me." Deny himself: your arguments, your judgments, your common sense sometimes. Follow Me!--and Christ is vindicated every time. Men have done the maddest things from this world's standpoint and have been vindicated. This is no suggestion that you should go and begin to do mad things. I am talking about the authority of Christ within, the difference of Christ from ourselves, and this is the first lesson the Holy Spirit would teach anyone coming into the School of Christ, that there is this great difference, this great cleavage, that He is one thing and we are quite another; and we can never be sure that we are on the right line save as we submit everything to Him.

This is why prayer has to have such a large place in the life of a child of God, and this is why prayer had such a large place in His life when He was here. The prayer life of the Lord Jesus is, in a certain realm and sense, the biggest problem that you can face. He is Christ, He is the Son of God, He is under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and He is without sin in His person, and yet, and yet, He must spend all the night in prayer after a heavy and long day's work. Again and again you come upon Him in prayer. Why must He pray? Because there are other influences at work, there are other things which are seeking to call for consideration and response and obedience, and He must keep all the time in line with the anointing, in harmony with the Spirit under whose government He has placed Himself, because He can decide nothing out from Himself. If He must do that, what of us? We are not even on His sinless level. We have all that in our very natures which works violently against God, God's mind, God's will. How much the more necessary then is it for us to have a prayer life, by which the Spirit is given an opportunity of keeping us straight, keeping us on the line of Divine purpose, keeping us in the ways of the Lord, and in the times of the Lord.

Beloved, if there is one thing that a child of God will learn under the Holy Spirit's lordship, it is this thing, namely, how different He is from us, how different we are from Him, how altogether other. But, blessed be God, now in this dispensation, if we are truly children of God, the altogether Other is not merely objective but within. That is the second phase of this matter of the 'other-ness'. The first phase is the fact of the difference. Will you accept this? Will you now, at this very point, this moment, just settle this? The Lord Jesus is altogether other than I am: even when I think I am most perfectly right, He may still be altogether other, and I can never, never rely upon my own sense of rightness until I have submitted my rightness to Him! That is very utter, but it is very necessary. Many of us have learned these lessons. We are not talking out of a book, we are talking out of our own experience. We have been quite sure at times that we were

right and we have gone forward to follow out our rightness in that judgment, and we have come to grief, and we have got into an awful fog of perplexity and bewilderment. We were quite sure we were right, but look where we have been landed! And when we come to think about it, and put it before the Lord, we have to ask ourselves, how much did I wait on the Lord and wait for the Lord about that thing. Were we not a bit precipitate with our own sense of rightness? And that is David and the ark all over again. David's motive was all right and David's sense of God's purpose was all right. That God wanted the ark in Jerusalem was right enough, but David got the thing into his soul as an idea, and it worked itself up as a great enthusiasm within him, and so he made the cart. The motive, the good motive, the good idea, the devout spirit, got him into most awful trouble. The Lord smote Uzzah, and he died before the Lord, and the ark went into the house of Obededom, and tarried there, all because man had a good and right idea, but had not waited on the Lord. You know the sequel. Later on, David said to the heads of the Levites, "Sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord, the God of Israel, unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye bare it not at the first, the Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not according to the ordinance." The instruction was there all the time, but he had not waited on the Lord. If David had brought his devout enthusiasm quietly before the Lord, He would have directed him to the instruction He had given to Moses, and said, in effect, 'Yes, all right, but, remember, this is how it is to be carried.' There would have been no death, no delay, things would have gone right through.

Yes, we may get a very good idea for the Lord, but we have to submit it to the Lord, to be quite sure it is not our idea for the Lord, but the Lord's mind being born in us. It is very important to learn Christ; He is so other.

You see, this divides Christians very largely into two classes. Christians can be, in the main, divided into these two classes. There is that very large class of Christians whose Christianity is objective, is outward. It is a matter of having adopted a Christian life, that now they do a lot of things which they once would not do. They go to meetings, they go to church, they read the Bible, lots of things that they used not to do; and they now do not do quite a lot of things they once did. That is what holds good more or less in that class. It is now a matter of not doing and doing, not going and going, being a good Christian outwardly. That is a big class with its various degrees of light and shade, a very big class of Christians indeed.

There are others who are in this School of Christ, for whom the Christian life is an inward thing of walking with the Lord and knowing the Lord in the heart, in greater or lesser degree. That is the nature of it, a real inward walk with a living Lord in their own heart. There is a great deal of difference between those two classes.

THE SPIRIT'S LAW OR INSTRUMENT OF INSTRUCTION

Well now, I must come to a close. The altogether 'other-ness'; by what means does the Spirit make that 'other-ness' known to us?--for the Spirit does not speak to us in audible language and words. We do not hear an outside voice saying, This is the way, walk ye in it! Then how are we to know? Well, it is in what the Apostle Paul calls "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus". "In him was life; and the life was the light." How are we to know, by what means are we to be enlightened on this matter, on the difference between our ways, our thoughts, our feelings, and the Lord's? How are we to have light? The life was the light. "He that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death." Then the Spirit's instrument, if I may call it that, of our education is life in Christ. That is to say, we know the mind of the

Spirit on matters by quickening, by sensing, discerning life, Divine life, the Spirit of life. Or, on the other hand, if we are alive to the Lord, we know when the Spirit is not in agreement with anything by a sense of death, death in that direction.

That is the thing that no one can teach us by words, by giving us a lesson. But it is a thing we can know. You know it by reactions, violent reactions often. You have taken a course, and you get a bad reaction. You strive in a certain direction to realize a certain thing, and if only you would stop for a moment and look at it, you know that you are trying to bring that about. You know quite well that this thing is not spontaneous, that this lacks the spontaneity which is a mark of the Lord. You know the Lord is not coming through there. You know quite well that you have no sense of spontaneity and peace. It has to be forced, to be driven, to be made to happen. More or less, I think, every one of you who is a true child of God knows what I am talking about. But remember, this is the Spirit's instrument in the School for teaching Christ-life. The mark of a Spirit governed, Spirit-anointed, man or woman is that they move in life, and that they minister life, and that what comes from them means life, and they know by that very law of life where the Lord is, what the Lord is in, what the Lord is after, what the Lord wants. That is how they know. No voice is heard, no objective vision is seen, but deep in the spirit life arbitrates, the Spirit of life.

How necessary it is for us to be alive unto God in Christ Jesus. How necessary it is for us to be all the time laying hold on life. If Satan can only bring his spirits of death to bear upon us and bring our spirit under the wrappings of death, he will cut off the light at once and leave us floundering; we do not know where we are, what to do. He is always seeking to do that, and ours is a continuous battle for life. Everything for the realization of God's purpose is bound up with this "life". This "life" is potentially the sum of all Divine purpose. Just as in the seed there is the life, not only of the seed, but of a great tree, and that life, if but released, will eventuate in that great tree, so in the life given to us in our spiritual infancy, our new birth, there is all the power of God's full and final and consummate thought, and Satan is out, not just to cut off our life, but to prevent God's final interests and concerns in the full display which is in that life which is given to us, that eternal life given to us now. The Spirit is always concerned with that life, and He would say to us, Guard that life: do not allow anything to come to interfere with that life: see that whenever there is something that grieves the Spirit and arrests the operation of that life, you immediately resort to the precious Blood which stands as a witness against all the death, that precious Blood of Jesus, the incorruptible life, the witness in heaven to victory over sin and death, by which you can be delivered from that arresting hand of Satan. That precious Blood is the ground upon which we must stand to deal with everything that grieves the Spirit and checks the operation of life, by which we come to know, and know in this living way, Christ in ever-growing fullness. The Lord help us.

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